



For Immediate Release

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Vermont Human Rights Commission Appoints New Executive Director Big Hartman



MONTPELIER, Vt. – The Vermont Human Rights Commission is pleased to announce the appointment of its new Executive Director, Big Hartman. Hartman follows the current Executive Director, Bor Yang, who has served in the position since November of 2018.

Bor Yang, Esq., current Executive Director, stated, “Big is one of the best staff attorney investigators who has worked at the Human Rights Commission. They bring a wealth of knowledge and passion to the position. I have all of the confidence in their ability to move this agency forward.”

Hartman has worked at the Human Rights Commission since September of 2021 as a Staff Attorney Investigator. In that role, they completed a large number of investigations concerning complaints of discrimination, many of which resulted in a finding of reasonable grounds by the Commission. Hartman has also assisted many parties in resolving their disputes by facilitating settlements. Hartman is passionate about providing training opportunities that can prevent discrimination from occurring by addressing topics such as fair housing laws, public accommodations best practices, unconscious bias, microaggressions, bystander intervention, and workplace harassment.

Big Hartman brings to the Commission eighteen years of experience as an attorney in Vermont. After graduating from Vermont Law School magna cum laude in 2005, Hartman worked at a Stowe law firm representing Workers’ Compensation claimants and personal injury plaintiffs. From 2007-2013, Hartman was in-house counsel at the Vermont State Employees’ Association, representing the union and its members in cases before the Vermont Labor Relations Board and in Vermont courts. Before joining the HRC, Hartman operated a solo law practice called Welcoming Workplaces that was focused on preventing workplace harassment through workplace trainings and management consultations. In 2019, Welcoming Workplaces contracted with the Vermont Commission on Women to compile resources and develop online content for the VCW’s workplace harassment prevention website (<https://workplacesforall.vermont.gov/>). Along with their broad experience as an attorney assisting both managers and employees, Hartman brings years of training and knowledge regarding equity and inclusion work. Over the years, Hartman has also served as a Board member for non-profit organizations, including the Vermont Association for Justice, the Washington County Bar Association, Circle of Women International, and the Pride Center of Vermont.



The Vermont Human Rights Commission was created by statute 35 years ago, with the purpose of enforcing anti-discrimination statutes and increasing awareness about the importance of full civil and human rights for all. In the past five years, under Bor Yang’s leadership, the Commission has significantly increased its reach and effectiveness. During her tenure, Yang nearly doubled the annual operating budget of the Commission, enabling the Commission to fund two new positions in the office and staff three investigative attorneys to conduct all discrimination investigations. The HRC has been able to provide extensive training for the public to thousands of Vermonters about preventing discrimination and adherence to Vermont law. Under Yang’s direction, the HRC has increased its capacity to litigate cases to enforce Vermont’s Fair Housing and Public Accommodations Act. Importantly, the HRC’s policy and legislative efforts have strengthened anti-discrimination statutes and bolstered coalitions working on racial equity efforts across the state.

“Bor Yang leaves behind an incredible legacy of advancing civil rights protections and policy in Vermont. I consider it my duty to carry on her significant achievements to the fullest. It is an honor and privilege to be able to serve the State of Vermont as Executive Director of this important agency. At a time when marginalized people across this country feel their freedoms and civil rights are more threatened than ever, the Vermont Human Rights Commission will continue to be an active voice for equity, safety, and inclusion for all.”

Hartman is the first outwardly queer, non-binary person to serve as Executive Director of the Commission. “I want all members of the LGBTQI+, BIPOC, and disability communities to feel that the State of Vermont is a safe, welcoming and inclusive place to live and work. Despite the progress that has been made, Vermonters still have much to do to eradicate discrimination. The amazing staff and devoted Commissioners at the Human Rights Commission will continue to serve as a crucial avenue of relief and justice for those who have faced discrimination in housing, public accommodations, or state employment.” In the coming years, Hartman plans to revamp the agency’s website, increase community and online outreach and training, and vigorously enforce the anti-discrimination statutes under the Commission’s jurisdiction through complaint processing, investigations, and litigation.

Representative Kevin “Coach” Christie, Chair of the Vermont Human Rights Commission said, “The Executive Director at the Human Rights Commission wears many hats. It was important to the Commissioners to find someone with knowledge, experience, a commitment to the mission and with the fortitude to propel this agency forward. We believe Big is that person. Thirty-five years ago, our lawmakers envisioned an agency at the forefront of the fight to promote and protect the civil and human rights of all Vermonters. In these times it seems even more necessary. Big’s character, integrity, quality of work and commitment to excellence is what the Human Rights Commission needs.”

Hartman will start their new role as Executive Director on July 31, 2023.

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